

**AN INITIATIVE AMENDING THE ELECTION PROCESS FOR
ELECTION OF GOVERNOR AND LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR OF
ALASKA, BY ADOPTING PREFERENTIAL, RANKED-CHOICE, OR
INSTANT RUN-OFF VOTING, REPEALING CONFLICTING STATUTES,
AND PROVIDING FOR SEVERABILITY**

BE IT ENACTED BY THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA:

Section 1. Findings and Purpose

The people of the State of Alaska find that it is in the public interest to adopt an election system in Alaska, known as preferential, ranked-choice or instant run-off voting, to insure that the elected governor and lieutenant governor of Alaska are acceptable to the greatest number of voters. Under the present system, in many elections, the majority of voters voted for someone other than the winner. Preferential, ranked-choice, or instant run-off voting should have the following positive effects on Alaskan gubernatorial elections:

(a) Candidates will be elected by a majority vote, rather than by a mere plurality vote as often occurs under the present system,

(b) A clearer mandate for a winning candidate's position will be created, giving better direction for policy-making,

(c) The taxpayers and candidates will save money because run-off elections will no longer be necessary,

(d) Supporters of third-party, independent, or underdog candidates will not have to waste their votes in order to support their parties, issues, or candidates, but will be able to voice support for their true beliefs with their first choice votes and their acceptable choices among the remaining candidates with their second and subsequent choices,

(e) Positive issue-based campaigns will be encouraged and negative campaigning should be virtually eliminated because candidates will know that they may have to obtain the second and third choice votes of voters supporting other candidates in order to be elected,

(f) Losing candidates, who offered valid programs acceptable to some of the voters, will not be forever tagged as "spoilers", "vote-splitters", or the "candidate that ensured the election of the candidate of the opposing party",

(g) Voter interest and turn-out should increase because a voter has more choices and a voter's vote will be more valuable than it is under the present system, and

(h) The adoption of or preferential, ranked-choice, or instant run-off voting will be simple

and not confuse the voters because the system is easy and very user-friendly - as simple as 1-2-3.

Section 2. Preferential, Ranked-choice, or Instant Run-Off Voting

The governor and lieutenant governor shall be chosen by the qualified voters of the State of Alaska at a general election. The candidates receiving the greatest number of votes shall be elected governor and lieutenant governor. The method of voting to determine which candidates have received the greatest number of votes in Alaskan elections for governor and lieutenant governor is preferential, ranked-choice or instant run-off voting. The ballots used in these elections shall provide that the voter may vote for all gubernatorial candidates or pairings of governor/lieutenant governor candidates in order of preference, mark no more than five choices for each office, and not assign the same ranking to more than one candidate for each office. The ballot shall permit the ranking of one write-in candidate per race along with candidates whose names are printed on the ballot.

Section 3. Counting of Ballots

AS 15.15.350. **General Procedure for Ballot Count** shall be amended to add additional subsections to read as follows:

(a) The first choice votes of each voter for governor shall be counted first. If, after all ballots are counted, a gubernatorial candidate has obtained a majority of the first choice votes for that race, further counting is not necessary, and that candidate and his or her lieutenant governor running mate are declared the winners.

(b) If no gubernatorial candidate has obtained a majority of the first choice votes, then the candidate with the fewest number of first choice votes shall be declared defeated, and votes cast for this candidate shall be transferred to the next choice continuing candidate marked on each continuing ballot, and added to that continuing candidate's vote total. However, if the total of the votes of the two or more candidates credited with the lowest number of votes is less than the number of votes credited to the candidate with the next highest number of votes, these candidates shall be declared defeated simultaneously and their votes transferred to the next choice continuing candidate marked on each ballot in a single counting operation. If the next-choice candidate has been eliminated, the vote is transferred to the next-choice candidate who is a continuing candidate. After this tabulation, if no continuing candidate receives a majority of the votes, then the continuing candidate with the fewest votes shall be declared defeated. This process of eliminating last-place candidates, transferring ballots from these candidates, and adding them to the totals of continuing candidates shall proceed until a candidate has a majority of the continuing ballots, in which case that candidate is declared the winner, or there is a tie between all remaining continuing candidates.

(c) If, in any election, a ballot has no more available preferences stated, that ballot shall be declared exhausted and shall not be counted further. A ballot assigning the same ranking to more than one candidate for an office shall be declared exhausted when the double ranking is reached. If a ballot skips a ranking, then the next ranking shall be counted.

(d) If there is a tie vote between candidates, the procedures of AS 15.15.460 shall be followed.

Section 4. Applicability

Preferential or instant run-off voting shall be used in all primary, regular and special elections for the election of the governor and lieutenant governor of Alaska.

Section 5. Definitions

(a) "Continuing ballot" means a ballot that is not exhausted.

(b) "Continuing candidate" means a candidate who has not been eliminated.

(c) "Exhausted ballot" means a ballot which has no more available preferential votes which may be counted.

Section 6. Repeal of Conflicting Statutes

All statutes and parts of statutes which conflict with the provisions of Sections (2) through (5) of this Act are hereby repealed.

Section 7. Severability

The provisions of this Act are independent and severable. If any provision of this Act, or the applicability of any provision to any person or circumstance, shall be held to be invalid by a court of competent jurisdiction, the remainder of this Act shall not be affected and shall be given effect to the fullest extent possible.